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Jose Santos Zelaya

President of Nicaragua



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JOSÉ SANTOS ZELAYA

THE intellectuality of the Spanish-American peoples should be measured only by their representative men.

In those countries still but imperfectly developed, where the different ethnical elements have not yet amalgamated to such an extent as to produce a typical racial standard, the men who rise above all others as the most perfect product of such peculiar factors, do actually represent by reason of their superior intelligence, all the latent energies of the people to which they belong, as well as their confused though instinctive tendencies to perfect themselves.

Such men possess the characteristics inherent to men of action, being both impulsive as well as persistent in their efforts, bold in their conceptions, patient to mature and firm to realize their plans. They feel that they have a mission to fulfil, and when they are not deaf to the advise of others, in their natural inclination to do good they leave their name and the memory of their deeds forever

linked to that of the period of their greater activity in favor of a social era along new lines, though to attain this end the very foundations of that society might have been shaken.

It is the temperament that makes the man, and such men have a triple mission in life which is to fight, organize, and civilize, a mighty task requiring both firmness of purpose and strenght of character.

To that class of men of destiny, who leave the stamp of their personality and their deeds in the history of their people, belongs General José Santos Zelaya, the leader of the Liberal party and the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Neither the hatred of the discarded elements that all labor of reform is bound to leave in its wake, nor the echo of their violent diatribe shall ever impair — on the contrary it will always enhance — the value of the colossal transformation which in a few years General Zelaya has succeeded in effecting in the customs and public institutions of his country.

To destroy that which exists, is the blind impulse of demagogy. To restore, to use for the good and the progress of the masses that which exists, is the work of the true democracy. Hence, in these American commonwealths, born to be republics, the real patriot, the patriot at heart is he who devotes his life and directs all his efforts to reform his country, and to better its condition.

The object of these lines being to give a brief review of the work and public life of General Zelaya, in order to facilitate the task we will consider separately the three main phases of his political career.

ZELAYA THE FIGHTER.

THE liberal party is a militant party, because no ideas tending to uproot old and established privileges can enter the mind of the masses without encountering a violent resistance.

Liberalism in the younger nations of America has to contend both with the opposition of the illiterate population, which is kept in darkness, and with the prestige of names and rules which is tolerated either because of personal interest or through habit.

To embrace such a political creed and to stand by it unflinchingly, to devote to such ideas the enthusiastic energy of youth and the sober thought of maturity, to spread it broadcast as the seed of good, to watch for its fair name and to uphold it by words and deeds, is not simply to foster the moral progress of a generation, but also to establish the positive and permanent advancement of the country itself for the benefit of the present and succeeding generations.

Zelaya since he stepped for the first time into the public arena, became a staunch supporter of liberalism, to the extent of

sacrificing, unhesitatingly, his comfort and quiet to his political ideal, while awaiting, an exile, the hour of his victorious return.

The exile is the crucible where great men purify their sentiments. Not until perfect freedom has been enjoyed in a foreign land, can one understand the horror of the fetters that bind liberty in our own country, against all laws of progress and social perfection.

Possessing with the noblest political virtues, all the traits which are found in those born to lead in the struggle for right, Zelaya's personality marked him as the undisputed leader of the liberal revolution which was destined to work miracles since its advent to power in 1893, when he began to practice the principles which he advocated when in the opposition.

The difference between the reformer and the average politician lies in the fact that the first is consistent in carrying out the ideas which have gained for him the respect and consideration of his fellow-citizens and the affection and confidence of his partisans, while the common politician is satisfied with ruling. To him the hour of triumph marks the time of rest. The reformer begins to work when he attains the highest position from which he may develop his plans.

Such has been the case with Zelaya. For him to conquer in war was not to make a name for himself; to fight for power was not to satisfy the yearnings of his liberal heart.

To liberalize his country, and to equalize

the rights and duties of his fellow-citizens; to develop the latent natural and social wealth of Nicaragua; to gain for the fatherland both a name and a place among the countries of the world; to educate the masses and modernize the educational institutions; to impress upon every feature of the country the seal of civilization and to mark its development along the lines of progress, such was the goal of the liberal revolution of 1893, and to this scheme, great and complex in its far-reaching results, Zelaya has devoted all the strength of his convictions, his wakeful hours, his military skill and his foresight as a statesman.

Liberalism incarnate in Zelaya, has found in his sword as a military leader, the safeguard of its principles, and in his energetic and civilizing rule as Chief Executive the lesson that teaches peoples the benefits of progress, and the just balance of liberty resting upon justice and right.

ZELAYA THE ORGANIZER.

THE crowning victory of the liberal revolution led by General Zelaya in 1893, was gained in the Legislative Chambers. The nation groaned under the weight of obsolete traditions originating in the Colonial era, but doggedly maintained and hostile to any and all new principles. The Congress of 1893 laid the foundations of a new era. The

Constitution promulgated in that year, was in the nature of a pact with a people conscious of its own rights, striving to have the fullest control of its own destiny.

Such a radical, complete and far-reaching reform could not be established, however, without meeting with a most stubborn resistance from the elements it sought to destroy. During the twelve years in which the liberal administration of Nicaragua has been put to the test, while resisting all attempts made to belittle its importance, it has extended its influence over the thinking people of the country, and become a part of the national existence. During that period five revolutions have been quelled, several revolutionary plots have been suppressed, the Administration has been forced to send its troops into foreign territory to demand respect for Nicaragua and the strictest neutrality, and also to be ready for any emergency arising out of the reversion to Nicaragua of a territory formerly occupied by a powerful European Monarchy, the unswerving purpose of the liberal party being to regain and retain such portion of Nicaraguan soil.

To meet these demands involving public peace and tranquility, it has been necessary to withdraw from other channels leading to the aggrandizement and progress of the nation, a sum in the neighborhood of \$15,000,000. Order has been finally established, the Mosquito Territory is now under the laws of the Republic, and the tribes which for a time were terrorized to hear the name of Nicaragua,

are now living a civilizing life, under a rule which kindles in them the sacred fire of patriotic love of country, and having overcome their suspicions they now are a portion of the nation.

The sovereignty of the country being thus reestablished, the Constitution of 1893 rules over the entire nation.

It is by virtue of this Constitution that all classes enjoy equal rights; property guaranteed as well as the freedom of thought and that of bequeath by will; *habeas corpus* is established as well as compulsory vote, compulsory education, protection of arts and industries, rights of representation of minorities, separation of State powers, municipal independence, secularization of cemeteries, suppression of mort-main, and intervention of the State in the legalization of marriage.

To such work done by the Legislators the Administration has responded by making legislation effective, and leading the country, notwithstanding the disturbances through which it has passed, over the road to progress.

In 1893 the Treasury showed a deficit of \$5,958,971.06, and after twelve years of a liberal administration, there is a surplus of \$2,784,400.21, notwithstanding the numerous expenses made in works of public utility and development, the preservation of order, and the amortization and final payment of debts created by former administrations.

The prompt discharge of the government obligations with foreign creditors, enhances

abroad the credit of the Republic to the extent that on the London Exchange, the bonds of 1886 which once were far below par, are now quoted at a premium.

Industrial activity and the means adopted to facilitate communication and protect commerce, have fostered the development of trade to such an extent that Nicaragua's exports amount to \$47,432,223.12 and imports to the value of \$37,549,093.07, or a difference in favor of the exports of about \$10,000,000.

In order to give life to such unparalleled development General Zelaya's administration creates rapid means of communication by land, liberates river navigation from the monopolies that prevented its free use, promotes navigation by sea, places the country in constant and immediate communication with its own sections as well as with the rest of the world by means of telegraph and cable, gives protection to railway lines, makes contracts for the navigation of unexplored waterways, enacts mining and forestry laws, and opens the nation's doors to immigration. Chinandego and El Viejo are connected by means of a branch railroad line; the Departments of Carazo and Masaya have another line; on the road from Granada to Corinto the old branch lines are run into the Central railway, thus preventing the vexatious delay produced by the shipping and unloading of goods both at Managua and Momotombo. The line to the Atlantic from San Miguelito to Monkey Point is under construction, while work on the line

to Matagalpa with branches to several of the northern towns has been commenced.

Commerce has been liberated from the monopoly of the navigation of Lake Nicaragua and the San Juan River, the Government having purchased the nine steamers belonging to the "Caribbean and Pacific Transit Co.," which have been devoted to military and customs revenue service. Contracts have been made with James Deitrick and the "New Orleans Central American Trading Company, Ltd." for the establishment of steamship lines to ply on the rivers Segovia, and Prinzapolka and their affluents. Large sums have been devoted to the building of the warehouses and wharves of the Bluff, repairs and improvements to the warehouses of Corinto, the construction of wharves at San Juan del Sur, San Jorge, and San Carlos, and other warehouses, public offices and beacons.

As regards the mail and telegraph service, in twelve years the Administration has increased the mileage and telegraph stations to 2,706 miles and 120 stations, respectively, at an expense of \$2,000,000. These figures do not cover a great many important works such as the laying of the cable between Corinto and Cardon, and Bluefields and the Bluff, nor the erection of a wireless telegraph station at Bluefields which will thus be placed in communication with New Orleans, and with Limon, Bocas del Toro, and other Caribbean ports.

The number of new mail routes is 17, while the mail service has been increased,

regulated and improved, by the adoption of the parcel post system. Transit charges through the United States and Panama are regularly paid.

Agriculture and mining have received special attention from the Zelaya Administration. By uniting the deed to the will the enactment of laws directed to facilitate the exploitation of metalliferous zones and the colonization of public lands, has been followed by the creation of technical commissions, some entrusted with the duties of discovering and denouncing mines, and assaying the minerals, while others are in charge of exploring and surveying vacant lands, marking out their respective boundaries, the construction of highways, etc.

It is due to all these important measures adopted by the Government, that so much capital, both native and foreign, is now invested in mining, and that 454,684 hectares of public land have been awarded and paid for, thus laying the foundation of wealth for the owners, and of prosperity for the country. The successful enterprises now in operation are bound to bring additional capital as well as increased immigration, adding in that way to the development of Nicaragua.

ZELAYA THE CIVILIZER.

THE degree of civilization attained by a country is measured by the outward appearance of its towns and cities, by the higher or lesser degree of education of its inhabitants, and by its relations with other peoples, the latter being the keynote of the real worth of such country.

And General Zelaya has given his whole attention to these three main points, with that foresight born of true patriotism which creates means out of nothing, to build up the main characteristics of a modern nation upon the ruins which are the outcome of inherited racial carelessness.

General Zelaya's ability as a civilizer may be measured by what he has accomplished in behalf of public education in Nicaragua, and this is in itself, the most brilliant denial of the accusations heaped on the liberal party by its detractors.

To educate the people is to make the people fit to enjoy liberty, to stand for the principles and not for the man. Every conscience that awakes to reason and analyses is in itself, a judge against absolutism and caprice. Hence, the Chief Executive who educates his people does not fear but love his people, his greatest pride being that he is the ruler of free men.

The benefits to be derived from education are not at present a sole privilege of the well-to-do classes in Nicaragua. All classes are

compelled to learn, education being free to individuals, the State defraying the necessary expenses for teachers and all school paraphernalia. Children are supplied with books, the teachers with comfortable homes, and from the sixth year the child who finds in the Kindergarten both amusement and profit, to the full grown person who follows a professional career, all enjoy an equal share of the paternal bounty of the liberal government. The efforts made by the Administration for civilization have not been confined to creating rural schools for the country, and city schools or institutes of higher education for the towns, but their beneficent action have extended to regions which, having been kept heretofore in darkest ignorance, have in the past alienated to the country, instead of attracting, men who are becoming useful citizens, while their minds find new horizons whose existence was unknown to them until now. Thirty primary schools scattered along the region extending from San Juan del Norte to Cape Gracias á Dios, provided with all that is necessary, and having over fifty teachers are open to-day for the teaching of all matters pertaining to a fair degree of education, and what counts for more, for the teaching of the mother tongue to the natives so as to attract them by gentle means to civilization in order to make them responsible citizens. The Administration being fully aware of the advantages that such system will necessarily produce if Indians are properly trained to teach those of their own race,

supports official scholarships for Mosquito Indians at the "Cristobal Colon College".

For the benefit of those desirous of acquiring a practical training, a division has been created at the Central Railway repair shops, which gives the same results as a school of Arts and Trades. So far the division has given the best results, and many efficient men have come out fitted to do all kinds of repair work, thus serving the double purpose of rendering invaluable and immediate service to the owners of large plantations and factories, and doing away with the necessity of sending abroad for repairs and duplicate parts that now can be made in the country.

While establishing by these means the solid foundations of a general system of education, which enables any thinking man to foretell the future of the country, the Administration has not forgotten to give attention to the elements of wealth found within Nicaraguan territory, and the country has to-day a fine Museum containing samples and objects of the greatest paleontological, archeological and historical value, as well as specimens of the fauna and flora, a collection of data which while reconstructing the past, lays the foundation for the future of the Republic.

While public education was receiving such signal aid from the Administration, attention was also given to the embellishment and improvement of cities and towns, because a civilized people cannot live without the comforts and advantages offered by refined

education. The old town having no pavement, lacking sidewalks, places of amusement, markets, slaughter houses, adequate town halls, etc., now ranks among the newest towns where all modern improvements are found. Towns which were kept separate because of the lack of means of communication, are now connected by fine roads, railways, bridges, etc. The Administration also aided in the development of lighting the Capital city by electricity, by paying the company the losses accruing through difference in exchange.

The Army which represents when well organized, the safeguard of order, the defence of the sovereignty and the strongest support of the Civil Power, was housed in sanitary barracks, and provided with able instructors, ambulance corps, hospitals, medical assistance, and the system of promotion based on merit and increased pay, has been established.

Nicaraguan young men who have distinguished themselves as scholars have been sent abroad at the expense of the nation, to perfect themselves and to bring home the latest scientific information, and the most approved methods of the century, so as to introduce them in Nicaragua to give her a place among the foremost countries of the world.

The country has been represented by its foremost sons, in expositions and fairs, industrial, scientific and other world congresses, thus placing the name of Nicaragua among the progressive countries of the age, which labor for universal fraternity and good will

among nations, as brought about by the exchange of ideas, and the drawing nearer of all peoples.

In order to preserve and maintain the most cordial relations with the other nations of the world, the liberal Administration has spared neither means nor efforts to attain that end. There was a pending award between Nicaragua and Costa Rica which kept both countries in a state of unrest, and General Zelaya bent all his energies to making such cause of friction disappear between the neighboring sister republics. There is still a boundary question pending with Honduras, but arbitration, which is the greatest weapon of civilization, will also terminate this difference without violence or friction of any sort.

The plan for the Confederation of the Central American States, thus uniting the destinies of its five republics into one single and common ideal of aggrandizement, has found a warm defender in General Zelaya who has always given unstinted support to all movements along these lines, as well as his decided and enthusiastic encouragement as a statesman.

In order to derive the greatest possible benefit for the country from its prominent men, the consular service has been made a regular career, leading to the highest diplomatic posts, while the representation of Nicaragua in all civilized countries, has been intrusted to Nicaraguans who serve their fatherland with love, devotion and pride.

But this is not all. The work of the reformer has gone far beyond this. General Zelaya's zeal for the better service of the Republic, and his foresight have led him to work unceasingly in the tremendous task of preparing able men to faithfully discharge the public duties of the country. Wherever a capable man has appeared, or a man fit for some special work has been found, our able statesman has not hesitated to employ them for the good of the fatherland. The younger element which was formerly ignored because of its inexperience, and was not trained for the public service of the country, under the supervision of General Zelaya has occupied the positions which they were apt to fill thus receiving the proper training which will fit them for the future.

Such is, broadly speaking, the work accomplished by General Zelaya. Whoever is like him the founder of an era, the creator of a modern commonwealth, the expounder of a political creed, ever faithful to his own teachings, because of his own peculiar temperament and accomplishments, deserves both the respect in which he is held by his contemporaries and the high position he has reached.



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